

REMARKS

This is in response to the Final Office Action mailed on June 15, 2006. In the Final Office Action, claims 1-18 are pending. Claims 5, 12, 13, and 16 are withdrawn from consideration and the remaining pending claims have been rejected by this Action. By this Response, all pending claims remain unchanged.

Claims 1-4, 6-8, 14-15, and 18 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Pat. No. 3,857,645 of Klein (hereinafter "Klein '645") in view of U.S. Pat. No. 3,988,852 of Klein (hereinafter "Klein '852"). Claim 1 is directed toward a splice system for a linear connection of fishing lines. The splice system includes a female connector having first and second opposite ends with the first end being connected to a first fishing line section. The second end of the female connector has a "coaxial opening therein, the connector having a coaxial interior feature with a radial extent." The splice system further includes a male connector having first and second opposite ends, the second end connected to "a fishing line section" and the first end configured for "coaxial insertion into the opening of the female connector." The second end comprises "a plurality of resilient petals having a radial extent greater than the radial extent of the interior feature of the female connector." Further, the system includes the feature that the resilient petals of the male connector "deform to allow passage of the second end of the male connector axially past the interior feature."

Klein '645 teaches a splice system having a connector head H, which is adapted to accept a leader L on one end and a line F on the other end. Connector head H is a small cylindrical one-piece body, as is shown in FIGs. 11 of the Klein '645 reference. It has an aperture formed into each end, one of which is configured to accept a leader L and the other of which is configured to accept a segment of fishing line F. There is no teaching or suggestion of a splice system having a female connector and a male connector configured to be attached to the female connector within Klein '645. Furthermore, Klein '852 fails to correct this deficiency.

Klein '852 teaches, as is shown in FIG. 1, a splice system having a connector C. Connector C, like connector head H of Klein '645, is a single piece splice system. Connector C has an opening on a first end 47, which is configured to accept the snell S. Connector C also has an

opening on a second end 46, which is configured to accept shank 41, which is nothing more than one end of hook H. Thus, connector C splices the hook H to the snell S.

Applicants respectfully disagree with the assertion in the Office Action that the shank 41 of hook H is a male connector portion of a splice system as is recited in claim 1. As described above, the male connector of claim 1 requires that a second fishing line section be connected to one of its ends. There is, however, no teaching or suggestion that hook H is configured to be connected to a second fishing line section. In fact, there is Klein '852 fails to teach or suggest that the second end of hook H is connected to anything. If nothing is attached to the end of the hook H other than the connector C, than hook H cannot be a part of a splice system. Instead, Applicants submit that the hook H is spliced to the snell S by the splice system of which it is not a part. Applicants submit that the hook H is no more of a male connector of a splice system than the second piece of fishing line in Klein '645 is. The Office Action admits as much when it says on page 3 that it would have been obvious to replace "the knot in the [fishing] line" with the first end of the fish hook. Thus, the Applicants respectfully submit that the combination of the two Klein patents does not teach a splice system with female and male connectors of the type recited in claim 1.

Even if it were the case that hook H were a male connector of a splice system as recited in claim 1, and the Applicants strongly submit that it is not, Klein '852 fails to teach or suggest that the second end comprises "a plurality of resilient petals having a radial extent greater than the radial extent of the interior feature of the female connector." The Office Action has asserted on page 4 – without support from the specification – that "there needs to be some deformation of the barbs 51." The Office Action reasons that "if there was no deformation, the barbs and the male connector [that is, the hook] would be difficult to insert because they would either [be] deforming or cutting the female connector and therefore easier to remove" because the splice system would be "cut or deformed."

Applicants respectfully respond that not only does Klein '852 fail to teach or suggest that which the Office Action asserts, but it specifically teaches that there does not need to be some deformation of the barbs 51, nor as claim 1 recites, do the barbs of Klein '852 need to be resilient.

Klein '852 teaches that connector C is formed of a "resilient material." (Klein '852, col. 3, l. 31.) Thus, Klein '852 teaches that the connector C can temporarily deform when the hook H is being inserted into one of its ends. Further, Klein '852 states that socket 46 of connector C, the portion of the splice system that engages hook H "will stretch to produce a desirable, tight fit." (*Id.* at col. 4, ll. 30-31.) Thus, Klein '852 specifically teaches in at least two locations that the connector C is resilient. However, Klein '852 does not teach that barbs 51 are resilient, nor does it imply that the barbs must be resilient.

Further, in another embodiment, Klein '852 specifically teaches that the barbs 51 are designed to "cut a thread-like slit in the connector socket 46 and the resulting fit of the shank 41a and connector will be very secure." (*Id.* at col. 4, ll. 64-66.) Further still, in another embodiment, Klein '852 teaches that the connector is molded onto the hook H. (*See id.* at col. 5, l. 50.) Thus, Klein '852 provides numerous examples where the hook and connector can be attached together without requiring that barbs 51 be resilient. Nowhere does Klein '852 teach or suggest that the barbs 51 are or must be resilient.

Thus, Applicants respectfully submit that Klein '852 fails to teach or suggest a splice system having a male connector that is inserted into a female connector at one end and is connected to a fishing line at the other end. Further, Klein '852 fails to teach a male connector having resilient petals that deform to allow passage of an end through an interior feature of the female connector. Thus, Klein '852 fails to cure the deficiencies of Klein '645 and the combination thereof do not teach or suggest all of the recited features of claim 1. For at least these reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that claim 1 and its dependent claims 2-4, and 6-8 are allowable over the two Klein references.

Independent claim 14 is a method for linear connection of fishing lines. The method of claim 14 includes providing a female connector and a male connector such as those recited in claim 1 and inserting the male connector into the female connector. For the same reasons described above with respect to claim 1, Applicants submit that claim 14 and its dependent claim 15 are allowable over the cited references.

Independent claim 18 recites a method for replacing a fishing line section. Claim 18

recites the steps of providing a first fishing line section "connected to a female connector, the female connector having an outer surface with an aperture disposed thereon." The method further recites the step of providing "a second fishing line section connected to a male connector, the male connector being connected to the female connector." As described above, the Klein references neither teach nor suggest providing male and female connectors of the type recited in claim 18. For at least these reasons, Applicants submit that claim 18 is allowable over the recited art. Therefore, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection of claims 1-4, 6-8, 14-15, and 18 be withdrawn.

Claims 9-11 and 17 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Klein '645 in view of Klein '852 as applied to claim 1 and further in view of U.S. Pat. No. 2,784,518 of Boyer. Applicants submit that claims 9-11 are allowable based on their dependency from claim 1. Similarly, Applicants submit that claim 17 is allowable based on its dependency upon claim 14. For at least these reasons, Applicants submit that claims 9-11 and 17 are allowable over the recited references. Withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

In summary, all claims remain unchanged in the Application. For at least the reasons given above, Applicants believe that the pending claims are allowable as written. Favorable action is hereby requested.

The Director is authorized to charge any fee deficiency required by this paper or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 23-1123. The Director is authorized to charge any fee deficiency required by this paper or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 23-1123.

Respectfully submitted,

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